

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) announced that significant federal funds for programs that will benefit Southern Maryland were included in the Fiscal Year 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Conference Report, passed today by the House of Representatives. Rep. Hoyer, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, took a lead role in securing the funding for these important projects during House consideration of the bill.

“I am pleased that Congress continues to recognize the value of investing in programs that develop partnerships to support agriculture, forestry or other natural resource-based industries throughout the state, while also working to preserve Maryland’s vital open spaces,” said Congressman Hoyer. “I am a strong supporter of the work being done at the Center for Maryland Agro-Ecology at the University of Maryland.”

“Furthermore, the technologies currently under development at the University of Maryland through the Chesapeake Bay Agro-Ecology Research Initiative may one day lead to effective methods for reducing nutrient concentrations in tributaries and the Chesapeake Bay,” Hoyer added.

“Finally, I’m thankful that this conference report included funding to study alternative uses for tobacco,” Hoyer said. “As cigarettes become increasingly less profitable, we must find innovative ways to keep tobacco producers moving.”

Congressman Hoyer helped secure funding for the following list of programs that will benefit Southern Maryland.

Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology to Receive \$406,000

The Maryland Center for Agro-Ecology was established, under the leadership of former Maryland Governor Harry Hughes, to convene environmental, business, and elected leaders to develop a consensus on research, education and policy programs in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The Center provides competitive grants and works to educate key officials and the public about the aesthetic, environmental and economic value of our farms, forests and other open spaces and the need to protect and enhance open space-based industries in Maryland.

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Since fiscal year 2003, Congressman Hoyer has secured \$1.5 million for the Center for Agro-Ecology to support vital initiatives that protect Maryland's open space and farm and forest-based enterprises which are significant contributors to Maryland's economy.

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University of Maryland Chesapeake Bay Agro-Ecology Research Initiative to Receive \$314,000

Over the past several years there have been serious outbreaks of the toxic microorganism Pfiesteria along the Atlantic Seaboard. Linked to the flow of excess nutrients into waterways, these toxic algae blooms seriously impact the regional agriculture-based economies and threaten vital finfish resources in the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland has emerged as the leader nationally in implementing agricultural nutrient management, soil conservation, tributary teams and other cooperative planning strategies to confront the Pfiesteria problem.

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Congressman Hoyer has helped lead this response to these invasive and destructive algae, securing more than \$10 million to react to the outbreak, contain it and study its effects on humans. He helped secure just over \$1 million for the Agro-Ecology Research Initiative since fiscal year 2002 and this year's funding would continue the progress of this program and will be matched equally by University of Maryland funds.

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Over the past 5 years, Congressman Hoyer has fought to provide over \$1.7 million in funding for a tobacco alternative study.

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University of Maryland Tobacco Alternative Study, \$332,000

For over 350 years tobacco production has been the heart of agriculture in Southern Maryland. As tobacco production for use in cigarettes becomes increasingly less profitable, farmers will require new crop options if agriculture is to remain viable in Southern Maryland and other traditional tobacco-growing regions. There is tremendous promise in alternative uses for tobacco. At the request of Congressman Hoyer, the Congress provided \$360,000 in each of the fiscal years from 2002 to 2004 for the Alternative Tobacco Program at the University of Maryland. While funding for this program was not included in the President's Fiscal Year 2005 budget, it was agreed to in the 2006 conference report. This research is working to develop new non-smoking uses for tobacco, and explores the many valuable uses of the plant. Successful development of this project could help maintain an agricultural base in Southern Maryland, and serve as a model for other tobacco-producing areas.

Hoyer Announces Federal Funds to Sustain Maryland's Leading Role in Agriculture Research

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